

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 623

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2637

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

FOR CEN DIRECTOR DAVID LAZAR ONLY

(PLEASE PROCESS AND DELIVER TO ADDRESSEE AT OPENING OF BUSINESS  
JUNE 27TH)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, CS

SUBJECT: DR. BURSTIN INTERPRETS CEN COUNTRY DIRECTOR

1. DIRECTOR OF "EXCELSIOR" DR. LUIS BURSTIN PROVIDED TO AN  
EMBASSY OFFICER A COPY OF A MEMORANDUM REFLECTING HIS VERSION  
OF A CONVERSATION HELD JUNE 19 WITH CEN DIRECTOR LAZAR. BURSTIN  
SAID HE HAD FORWARDED A COPY OF THE MEMORANDUM TO EX-PRESIDENT  
FIGUERES. (A COPY WAS PRESUMABLY CONTAINED IN A SEALED EN-  
VELOPE FORWARDED TO CEN BY CLASSIFIED POUCH ON JUNE 26 AT  
BURSTIN'S REQUEST.)

2. BURSTIN'S VERSION OF THE CONVERSATION EXPANDS DANGEROUSLY  
BEYOND THE MEMCON LAZAR PROVIDED TO THE EMBASSY BEFORE DE-  
PARTING SAN JOSE. UNDER THE HEADING "RESUME OF PRINCIPAL IDEAS  
AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY DAVID LAZAR IN CONVERSATION WITH ME  
(AND MY WIFE) ON THURSDAY, JUNE 19" BURSTIN PROCEEDS TO RECOUNT  
THE CONVERSATION IN TWO SINGLE-SPACED PAGES.

3. BURSTIN SAYS THAT LAZAR EXPLAINED THE IMPORTANCE TO THE  
UNITED STATES OF COSTA RICAN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND EX-  
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PRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE POOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION

OF THE COUNTRY WHICH "PROBABLY BY THE END OF THE YEAR WILL PRESENT A GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS THAT WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A POLITICAL CRISIS. FACED WITH THIS PERSPECTIVE, WHAT PREOCCUPIES HIM (LAZAR) IS THAT, ACCORDING TO GENERAL OPINION HE HAS HEARD, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOING ANYTHING. HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND HOW IT IS POSSIBLE THAT LIC. ODUBER DOES NOT DESIGN IMMEDIATE POLITICAL AND TECHNICAL ACTION PLANS TO RESOLVE OR AT LEAST FACE THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS: THE GOVERNOR'S DOING NOTHING IS THE MOST OMINOUS ASPECT OF THE SITUATION.

4. BURSTIN WRITES THAT LAZAR SAID THAT ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN IF A POLITICAL CRISIS OCCURS INCLUDING A "STATE OF CHAOS AND DISORDER FOMENTED BY THE EXTREME LEFT". BURSTIN SAYS THAT LAZAR DESCRIBED THE GOVERNMENT AS APPEARING TO HIM LIKE A BOAT "WITHOUT A MOTOR, WITHOUT ORIENTATION, AND WITHOUT DIRECTION". HE RECOUNTS LAZAR AS SAYING THAT THE U.S. IS FUNDAMENTALLY INTERESTED IN SEEING NO BREAK IN CONSTITUTIONAL LEGALITY IN COSTA RICA. LAZAR, ACCORDING TO BURSTIN, SAID THAT THE U.S. MIGHT "DO ANYTHING, INCLUDING ARMED INTERVENTION, IN ORDER TO AVOID A BREACH IN THE DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION AND TO PRESERVE CONSTITUTIONAL LEGALITY".

5. IN THE FINAL PARAGRAPH, LAZAR IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD BURSTIN THAT IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT IF THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS CONVERSATION WAS REPORTED TO FIGUERES, BUT NOT TO ODUBER.

6. IN VIEW OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT EITHER BURSTIN OR FIGUERES MAY TRY TO USE THE CONTENTS OF THIS MEMORANDUM AGAINST ODUBER AND ALSO PREJUDICE OUR POSITION THE AMBASSADOR HAS REQUESTED AN APPOINTMENT AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO REBUT PARTS OF BURSTIN MEMORANDUM. LAZAR'S MEMCON OF THE CONVERSATION WILL BE THE AMBASSADOR'S BASIS FOR DISPUTING BURSTIN'S INTERPRETATION OF WHAT LAZAR SAID. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS FROM LAZAR THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL. LAZAR'S MEMCON OF THE CONVERSATION ALSO SENT IN JUNE 26 POUCH.  
TODMAN

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## Message Attributes

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